



Chief State School Officers, Urban School Leaders Offer Statements of Support for *Commitments on High-Quality Assessments*

More than 30 state and urban school leaders have offered strong statements of support for the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Council of the Great City Schools [*Commitments on High-Quality Assessments*](#), a series of established principles to guide state leaders and district leaders in making sure every assessment administered is high-quality, coherent, and meaningful to students, parents and teachers.

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Statements of Support from Chief State School Officers

California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson:

“The right assessment, given in the right place at the right time, can provide valuable tools for students, parents, school officials and state policy makers as they strive for constant improvement of our education system. Once again, CCSSO has provided helpful groundwork for the conversations now taking place in states around the best way to the next generation of assessments.”

Connecticut Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor:

“Connecticut has embarked upon a multi-faceted effort to address the amount and the quality of testing in its public schools. In September, Governor Malloy and I asked Secretary Duncan to join Connecticut in exploring ways within federal law to reduce the number of high-stakes exams in Grade 11, given the currently overcrowded nature of the junior year in terms of testing. Last year, Connecticut partnered with the national education organization Achieve to pilot a tool to help superintendents take stock of their use of tests, and to identify areas where testing can be reduced. This year, the State Department of Education is providing competitive grants to help districts eliminate tests that are outdated, redundant, or do not contribute to student learning. We are grateful to CCSSO for the opportunity to dialogue with fellow states on the importance of administering a high-quality, transparent, coherent, and non-redundant assessment system to support student learning.”

District of Columbia State Superintendent of Education Jesús Aguirre:

“The District of Columbia – like much of the rest of the nation – is undergoing a great deal of change: we have adopted new standards, we are implementing a brand new set of more challenging assessments, and we have established new ways of evaluating our schools, our



teachers, and our school leaders. This is a critical time in our ongoing efforts to reform our schools and we remain committed to implementing meaningful and transparent assessments.”

Georgia State School Superintendent Dr. John Barge:

“I fully support the Assessment Commitments document as it reflects my feelings about our testing program. I believe we are testing students too much and have overlapping and redundant assessments at the state and local level. I commend CCSSO and CGCS for developing this document and I look forward to working with policymakers and district superintendents in Georgia to ensure we have meaningful and high quality assessments.”

Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna:

“Everything we do in education must be focused on improving student achievement. The curriculum we use, the textbooks we adopt, and lesson plans that are taught must all provide learning opportunities to inform educators; assessments are no different. If an assessment doesn’t lead to higher student achievement, then it doesn’t serve an educational purpose and shouldn’t be administered,” said Superintendent Tom Luna. “We also need transparency as to what tests are given and at which levels: school, district, state, and national. Often, parents are concerned about over-testing, but aren’t sure of the reasons. Six years ago, the State Board of Education went through a deliberate process to evaluate Idaho’s assessments and ensure any state test was of high quality, provided accurate and timely data, and was part of a coherent system to improve student achievement. I believe the principles released by CCSSO will guide other states to do the same.”

Illinois Superintendent of Education Dr. Chris Koch:

“Assessments have a multitude of purposes but, in general, are tools to help us to better understand individuals so as to intervene on their behalf. Teachers use assessments to gain a better understanding of students and behaviors associated with learning. Assessment data helps teachers gauge capacity to learn, guide teaching, check learning progress, identify learning difficulties, improve teaching techniques and assess teacher effectiveness. Administrators can use assessments in making decisions about overall educational planning, in determining an instructional program’s strengths and weaknesses, in making decisions about grouping students for instruction, identifying where supervision is needed and in how well a school is achieving its objectives. Such information can help parents to better understand both the performance of their child and their school. Assessments build on the classroom experience and don’t take away from it.”

Iowa Department of Education Director Brad Buck:

“The principles and commitments on assessments issued today by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Council of the Great City Schools offer a compelling approach to the responsible and effective use of assessments. In Iowa, we are using a thoughtful, inclusive process to redesign our state assessment system. We have a cross-section of stakeholders who understand our need for a high-quality assessment that is closely aligned with our state standards, reflects what is taught in classrooms, and moves us toward having students



demonstrate high levels of knowledge necessary for success in college and career training. It's an exciting, pivotal time in our state's education system."

Kansas State Department of Education Interim Commissioner Brad Neuenswander:

"Kansas supports the need for high quality, meaningful assessments that are aligned to the college and career ready standards and that challenge students to demonstrate the depths of their knowledge. Assessments not only provide a critical piece of information that helps to inform instruction, they provide an opportunity for consistent benchmarking to ensure students are prepared for whichever path they choose to pursue after graduation."

Kentucky Commissioner of Education and CCSSO Board President Dr. Terry Holliday:

"High quality assessments can provide important information for teachers, students, parents and administrators. Even at the earliest grades, the right tests can indicate whether a student is on track for college/career-readiness and, if not, indicate what interventions may be necessary. In Kentucky, state testing, on average, takes less than one percent of instructional time each year. Still, we must strike a balance at the national, state, district, school and classroom levels between what is necessary and what is too much," he said. "I wholeheartedly support CCSSO's and the Council of the Great City Schools' efforts to promote the responsible use of high quality assessments to advance student learning."

Louisiana State Superintendent John White:

"The value of testing at its essence is that it tells the truth, and that is a civil rights issue first and foremost. That should not be forgotten by anyone. We should always be conscious that we still have a country and a society that is rife with inequity. Until the time when we can ensure every family of an equal opportunity to achieve an excellent education, we must conduct an annual measurement of our delivery of our education so we can lay bare the truth as to whether we succeed in educating every child."

Maryland State Superintendent Lillian M. Lowery:

"Maryland, like many states, is working with local school systems to implement fewer, better assessments, and limit the amount of time spent testing. We know that great teaching leads to real learning, and our teachers and school leaders make the best instructional decisions for their students. We must work together to utilize the best information available and efficiently meet the needs of every school and family."

Massachusetts Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester:

"I am happy to see the Council of Chief State School Officers affirming that high-quality assessments are part of learning, and I'm also happy to see dialogue continue around how assessments are used. In Massachusetts, we have already begun to take a closer look at the variety of assessments used in classrooms and how they serve students."

Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Michael Flanagan:



"These principles for assessments represent best practices that Michigan can support. Transparency, accountability, and building strong partnerships among stakeholders will forge effective assessments to measure where our students need to be academically, and offer useful information for educators at every level."

Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius:

"It's well past time for a reasonable conversation about the use of assessments in good teaching and learning and how they can be used to ensure all kids are getting an equal opportunity for a great education. Good teaching – which means instruction that is aligned to high standards – includes assessing how well and how many students are meeting the standards. *Good teaching is not test prep.* Any assessments that are given to students, whether state, federal or local, should satisfy two key questions: does this test help our teachers teach better and do they help our students learn better? If the answer to either is no, they should not be given."

Mississippi State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carey M. Wright:

"High-quality assessments go hand-in-hand with the implementation of higher academic standards. You cannot have one without the other. We are committed to administering new assessments that are aligned to our state's college- and career-ready standards. These assessments are critical to providing teachers and students with a meaningful measure of what students are learning in class. High-quality assessments also drive instructional practice by providing crucial information to educators and school leaders that inform decisions about instruction, resources, and policies."

Missouri Commissioner of Education Chris Nicastro:

"We believe every student can learn and every student deserves access to high quality schools. We check for that learning through high quality state assessments. These tests help us identify schools that need more support and create policies that encourage all children to succeed."

Nevada State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dale Erquiaga:

"The Nevada Department of Education is committed to ensuring our students and educators have assessments of the highest quality possible, aligned to the critical task of instruction. I am pleased to join my fellow Chief State School Officers in working to evaluate the assessment system, create a truly aligned system for Nevada, and increase transparency in all areas. Working together, we can ensure that Nevada students, parents, and educators have the necessary information to ensure success."

New Jersey Acting Commissioner of Education David Hespe:

"Measuring student progress is important in preparing our children for success in life, as we can better guide instruction and provide needed intervention. Assessments should be part of a coherent system, in which the assessments complement each other to provide information we need to improve student learning. Too often, students take tests that are designed to be used for a single purpose. Better assessments and more coordination among educators, from the classroom to the central office to the state education department, would allow students to take



fewer formal assessments during the course of the year without sacrificing our ability to have crucial feedback about how students are learning."

New Mexico Secretary Hanna Skandera:

"We believe it is essential to administer assessments with student learning as the top priority. We continue to work hard to ensure assessments in New Mexico are a critical tool in the education process, not a hindrance. We have decreased testing time on average over the last four years, we are training our teachers on how to use data to drive instruction and we are partnering with districts to thoughtfully examine practices at the school level to ensure our assessments are delivering critical information to educators and parents."

New York State Education Commissioner John B. King, Jr.:

"High quality assessments are an integral part of teaching and learning. They provide useful feedback to teachers, parents and students. In New York, we haven't increased the number of tests the state administers, and virtually all of the tests we give are required by federal law. Unfortunately, due to various pressures at the federal, state and local level, local testing has increased in many districts in New York, and this additional local testing does not always support good instruction and sometimes even crowds out time for student learning. Testing should be the minimum necessary to inform effective decision-making in classrooms, schools and districts. Earlier this year, New York asked for and received a waiver to eliminate double-testing for our accelerated 8th grade math students. We've introduced a grant program to help reduce non-essential local testing in hundreds of school districts across the state. More important, these grants will help teachers teach more and test less, which is exactly what our students need."

North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. June Atkinson:

"Student assessments are an important way for us to be sure that students are learning appropriately and that we are good stewards of public resources. As North Carolina's State Superintendent, I support this unified effort by state education leaders to provide and support assessment systems that are clear, coordinated and designed to help teaching and student learning. Parents and students should be able to see what is expected of students from kindergarten through graduation and how assessments play a role in learning and advancement."

Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Janet Barresi:

"Assessments are a critical tool in our efforts to strengthen education and bolster academic achievement. By letting us know what students are learning and where challenges lie, assessments are vital to making certain our schools are held accountable to parents, students and communities. Evaluating the success of a school or district requires sound metrics, and that is where assessments play an important part."

Oregon Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Rob Saxton:

"It's important for educators to have the right tools in their toolbox, and one of those tools is access to appropriate types of assessments. We must ensure the assessments are of high-



quality and provide the important feedback loops to improve instruction, programs, and ultimately improve student outcomes and learning.”

Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Deborah A. Gist:

“As educators, none of us wants to test students too much, and each of us wants assessments that help us make good decisions about instruction. Through an initiative we call The Assessment Project, the Rhode Island Department of Education and Rhode Island School Superintendents’ Association have joined forces to develop guidance on improving state and local assessment decisions and practices. Together, we want to ensure that Rhode Island schools use high-quality assessments that provide excellent information to support individual students in a way that improves, but does not disrupt, instruction.”

Tennessee Commissioner of Education Kevin Huffman:

“We need high-quality annual assessments to understand how each individual child and each group of children are progressing. Tennessee provides transparent information to parents about which standardized assessments used in each district. We must continue our work to ensure that the assessments themselves are high quality and measure the right skills.”

Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Steven Staples:

“Quality assessments play a critical role in improving outcomes for students by measuring individual progress and identifying under-performing schools in need of support and intervention. The Commitments to High Quality Assessments announced today – which I am pleased to endorse – mirror efforts already underway in Virginia to introduce more innovative assessments and to identify duplicative testing practices that can get in the way of good instruction.”

Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn:

“I appreciate that the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Council of the Great City Schools have put together this thoughtful commitments document. Every day we strive to make sure the assessments are high-quality and efficient. By high-quality, I mean that the results are reliable: They can be used to help students – and educators – improve. By efficient, I mean that we don’t overtest. We use only those assessments that best indicate student performance. The commitments document is a great reminder to us all about both the benefits and responsibilities of assessments.”

Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Anthony Evers:

“These commitments are key to ensuring we continue to use high quality assessments. This school year our new, meaningful assessments will advance student learning. It is important that our assessments give our students, parents, and educators what they need to be successful while being vigilant about over testing and test preparation.”



Statements of Support from Large-City School District Leaders

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Superintendent Heath Morrison:

"In Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, we support assessment for learning, assessments which provide timely, actionable data. Using timely, high quality summative and formative assessments, teachers can intervene at the time of need and stretch all learners toward meeting college- and career-ready standards. The High-Quality Summative Assessment Principles published by the Council of Chief State School Officers is a start in outlining changes that need to be made by policymakers. As a member of the Council of Great City Schools, we support efforts to reduce unnecessary testing."

Cleveland Metropolitan School District Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon:

"As testing has become increasingly important in the understanding of how our students grow and in the assessment of our teachers' and other educators' performance, it is more important than ever to ensure that these assessments are of the highest quality and appropriate rigor. The combined efforts of the CCSSO and CGCS outlined today will help us to study and leverage the highest power of these important assessments in the least intrusive manner."

Houston Independent School District Superintendent Terry Grier:

"Making sure that our assessments of student progress are accurate, transparent, and cohesive is one of the most important things that public school educators could be doing right now. This announcement by the Great City Schools and the Chief State School Officers is something I strongly support."

Kansas City (Missouri) School Board Member Airick Leonard West:

"Raising the rigor of standards without raising the quality of assessment would be counterproductive. As a member of the state-wide taskforces responsible for revising Missouri's K-12 standards, I strongly welcome this effort on the part of CCSSO and CGCS."

Long Beach Unified School District Board of Education Vice President Felton Williams:

"The Long Beach Unified School District strongly supports the CCSSO and CGCS commitments on high-quality assessments. Our school system is nationally and internationally recognized for its effective use of data to drive instruction and professional development. We have earned such recognition in part because we have long believed in creating and administering high-quality assessments that are meaningful and part of a coherent system. A school district's continuous improvement efforts are heavily dependent on high-quality data. To obtain high-quality data, we must first have high-quality assessments."

Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent John Deasy:

"I could not be in stronger support of this joint effort by the country's premier state and city educational organizations to take a hard look at how our nation assesses the academic attainment of its children. For too long, we have piled one assessment on top of another



without a clear game plan for what we were doing and why. This collaboration has the promise of bringing some badly needed rationality to this very public and important debate.”

Oakland (CA) Unified School District School Board Member and Chair of the Council of the Great City Schools Jumoke Hinton Hodge:

“It is the responsibility of local, state, and federal entities to ensure that we are using academic assessments of student learning that are useful to teachers and will benefit students. We need more than cumbersome ranking systems and fill-in the bubble tests to improve achievement. What the Chief State School Officers and the Great City Schools are announcing today is an important first step in moving towards new standards and ensuring that our assessments measure up to the goals we are setting for the college and career readiness of our children. It is also an important occasion for revisiting questions of equity and opportunity in our schools and a chance to look afresh at whether these assessments further that goal or hinder it. I fully support this critical first step.”

San Francisco Unified School District Superintendent Richard Carranza:

"Educators across the nation recognize the need for high quality, CCSS-aligned assessments in order to ensure the highest quality teaching and student learning. In urban school systems, this need is particularly important in ensuring equity for all students - not only for those that need additional support, but also for those students that benefit from additional acceleration in their learning. The promise of these assessments is tantamount to the tools necessary to continue to build America's great public schools. I support this effort by cities and states to ensure that these assessments are high quality and do not duplicate each other."

Toledo Board of Education President Cecelia M. Adams:

"Toledo Public Schools has been moving full steam ahead and taking actions for nearly three years that fully support the statement of Commitments from CCSSO and CGCS on High Quality Assessments. We have been earnestly preparing for the full implementation of PARCC and updating our technology for it and other online assessments. We plan to stay the course and greatly appreciate the leadership of CCSSO and CGCS in staying on the frontline for high quality standards and assessments".

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